

Monmouth University Department of English Master of Arts in English
INSTRUCTIONS FOR MA CREATIVE WRITING: MANUSCRIPT SEMINAR/EN 644

General Information

The MA Manuscript Seminar/EN 644 constitutes the one-semester capstone of the student's academic work in their creative writing program. It should represent the student's strongest single-genre creative work. The MA manuscript should extend and deepen both thematically and stylistically the creative work written in previous MA creative writing workshops at Monmouth University, through intensive revision of that work and the writing of new work, such that it can be used as a writing sample in a student's application for subsequent graduate study (MFA or Ph.D.) or form the basis of an expanded, book-length work.

First and Second Readers

The Manuscript Seminar/EN 644 is supervised under the direction of a First Reader, a member of the MFA creative writing faculty, and a Second Reader, a creative writing faculty member. They should be contacted the semester before EN 644 to confirm their participation in the project and to begin developing the Manuscript Seminar Proposal. The student should also contact the MA Graduate Program Director to confirm their Readers and the project. The student should review their academic Audit found on the student's WebAdvisor portal, verify their concentration* and that the intended course is listed on their Audit. Then, email the MU Registrar's Office to confirm eligibility for the course and projected graduation date.

*The student concentration has been the focus of the student's MA studies. The MA concentration is listed at the top of the student's "Academic Audit": MA Program Concentration.

EN 644/Manuscript Seminar (Samples are on the MA Website and eCampus Portal)

Proposal and Syllabus

The semester before Manuscript Seminar/EN 644 starts, the student must meet with their approved First Reader to discuss and then independently write a 500-word Proposal that describes the intended project's synopsis, aesthetic approach, formal considerations, and goals. The Proposal is not a formality but a substantive part of the intellectual process of developing a project of appropriate focus and scope. The student will also construct a Syllabus with meeting schedules and a short bibliography. After the student completes those two documents, Proposal and Syllabus with bibliography, they submit them as PDFs via MU email to their First Reader, GPD, and Michele McBride (see below), who will register them by submitting the two documents (Proposal and Syllabus with bibliography) via an Etrieve form, "GR Manuscript-Project-Practicum-Internship," and attaching the final PDFs. The Etrieve form will be sent through an approval channel that includes the Registrar, GPD, Chair, and Dean. Registration must be completed on time so that students can meet all financial, registration, and program deadlines. **Students cannot self-register for these courses.** *Please note that the summer study of EN 644/Manuscript Seminar is discouraged.

Reader Meetings

In the semester of EN 644, the student should expect to meet with the First Reader regularly (bi-monthly). The Second Reader meetings are held three times, once during the start of the project, the mid-point, and the end-of-the-semester. These meetings and dates will be clearly stated on the Syllabus and agreed upon between the student and their Readers.

Manuscript Content

During the semester of Manuscript Seminar/EN 644, the student will develop and submit their single-genre creative manuscript for which they have had substantive coursework. The manuscript work should be equally distributed between workshoped and revised pieces (50%) from their current MA program and new creative work (50%) under the First Reader's supervision. The student will work with the

Readers toward revision and a final draft and an arrangement of their work that demonstrates unique characteristics and a cohesive vision. The manuscript may consist of poems, short stories, creative nonfiction, a novella, or (with the First Reader's permission) sections of a larger work in a single genre. The manuscript's length shall be determined by the student and First Reader and be appropriate to the genre—generally not more than 40-50 pages (maximum) for poetry and prose (exclusive of the introductory critical essay, annotated bibliography, table of contents, acknowledgments, notes, or similar materials).

Critical Essay

The manuscript includes the introductory critical essay (5 pages and works cited) that elaborates on a statement of aesthetics, a consideration of influences, a discussion of the discipline, and craft evident in the creative work. The critical essay should be included at the beginning of the manuscript, acting as an introduction.

Annotated Bibliography

The student will also complete a 20-entry, 20-page bibliography with two-to-three substantial paragraphs of annotations per entry. The First Reader will decide the format for the annotations. It might include authorial credentials, summary, and connection to the student's use of themes, craft, aesthetics, influences, and process. Items in the bibliography might include novels, novellas, creative non-fiction, short fiction, poetry, craft, volumes of correspondence, biographies, autobiographies, interviews, critical studies, and journal articles.

Defense

The completed and revised manuscript should be submitted to the Readers by the tenth-to-eleventh week of the semester. Readers must not be asked to read documents submitted after that point. The revised document should be sent to the Readers and the GPD in preparation for the thirteenth-week Defense. As the semester of Manuscript Seminar nears completion, the Readers and student must schedule a formal Defense with the GPD. The one-hour Defense occurs during the last week of regularly scheduled classes (not during final exams). The format will typically follow: the student reading from their creative manuscript, a presentation regarding the introductory critical essay (including themes, craft, aesthetics, influences, process), then questions from and discussion with the Readers and GPD. After that, the First Reader will ask the student to wait outside the room while the committee discusses their evaluation. The student returns for manuscript feedback, details of the completion of their final draft, grading, and the signing of release forms (available on the MA website).

Final Draft

The material submitted must earn a grade of B or higher. The grade is agreed upon by the First and Second Readers. Following the Defense, the student must submit a revised version, final draft of the manuscript in Word and PDF documents via MU Email to Readers, the GPD, and Michele McBride. The student must also upload these documents to their student eCampus EN 644 course. The final draft is sent to the Monmouth University Guggenheim Library to be bound in book form. One copy will be archived in the Monmouth University Library. One copy will be housed in the English Department.

Program contacts:

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Ms. Michele McBride, Secretary: mmcbride@monmouth.edu

*Please note that EN 644/Manuscript Seminar is only for MA creative writing track students, not MFA students.